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Badlands in Brief

Wildlife Episode Transcript

Welcome to Badlands National Park. I'm ranger Julie Johndreau.

At first glance, the vast mixed grass prairie can seem lifeless. But in reality, this ecosystem is home to over 250 species of wildlife including birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals.

When most people look for wildlife in the park, they hope to see large mammals such as bison, bighorn sheep, deer, and pronghorn. When it comes to finding animals, there are never any guarantees, but we have put together a few tips to help you.

You can see bison from the Sage Creek Rim Road on the west side of the park. Look for bison anywhere between the Sage Creek Campground and Robert's Prairie Dog Town. In fact, prairie dog towns such as this one are excellent places to look for many other prairie species. You might even spot a bobcat, a badger, or a swift fox on the prowl.

As you continue through the park, be on the lookout for bighorn sheep from Robert's Prairie Dog Town to Ancient Hunters Overlook. Ewes and lambs are often spotted from the road in this area. Notice that their horns really aren't that big. It is only the rams that have the immediately recognizable large curled horns.

As you cruise the rest of the Badlands Loop Road, you could see mule deer just about anywhere. Watch for their big ears and bouncing gait.

Pronghorn, also known as antelope, are often grazing in the stretch of prairie on the north side of the road from Homestead Overlook to Bigfoot Pass. Pronghorn have characteristic white markings. All males and some females have the pronged horn for which they are named.

If you experience an exciting wildlife sighting, stop at the Ben Reifel Visitor Center to let a ranger know. Rangers will update the map and share your sighting with other visitors.

Success in finding park wildlife is dependent on many factors such as weather, time of day, and just plain luck. Consider driving the loop road at dusk or dawn. This will increase your chances of seeing all kinds of park wildlife.

Still haven't seen anything? Try going for a hike. The longer you stay in the park, the better your chances of seeing wildlife.

Remember to stay a respectful distance away from any park wildlife. When an animal reacts to your presence it means that you are too close. Good luck looking for wildlife and I hope you enjoy your visit to Badlands National Park.

Thank you for watching Badlands in Brief.